Executive Summary

Study Objectives

The Southwest Georgia Interstate Study was undertaken to address four primary objectives:

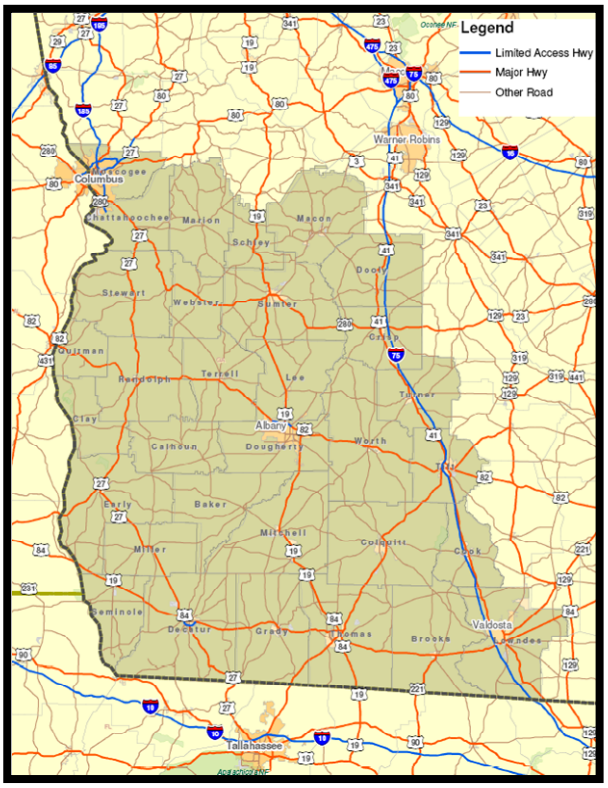
- ***Objectively examine the accessibility requirements necessary to meet the personal, business, and freight mobility needs of Southwest Georgia, today and in the future (2040);***
- ***Identify, evaluate, and recommend the transportation system improvements that will be needed to satisfy the personal, business, and freight mobility needs of Southwest Georgia, today and in the future (2040);***
- ***Identify and evaluate potential routes for an interstate type freeway facility linking Southwest Georgia to the existing Interstate System; and***
- ***Recommend cost effective improvements that provide the appropriate linkage of Southwest Georgia to the existing Interstate System.***

To meet these objectives the study was conducted in four phases. The first phase was a detailed investigation of the existing transportation service conditions in the study area. The second phase of the study was an analysis of future (2040) conditions in the southwest Georgia study area. The third phase of the investigation involved the identification and initial screening of potential interstate corridors within the study area. The fourth, and final, phase of the investigation focused on the selection and more detailed evaluation of four alternate corridors for a potential interstate within the study area. In addition to the investigation of these four interstate corridors, this final phase of the project involved the identification and evaluation of other potential transportation system improvements in the study area which included, roadway widening, addition of passing lanes, improvements to upgrade existing facilities to current standards, and intersection improvements to address operational deficiencies at isolated locations.

Study Area

The general study area for this investigation encompassed 32 counties in the southwestern portion of the State of Georgia generally bounded by I-75 on the east, the Georgia-Alabama state line on the west, the Georgia-Florida state line on the south, and south of State Route 96 on the north. The study area is depicted in Figure 1, and the counties in the study area are listed in Table 1.

Figure 1
Study Area



Source: Southwest Georgia Interstate Study

Table 1
Counties in Study Area

Baker	Cook	Grady	Mitchell	Stewart	Webster
Brooks	Crisp	Lee	Muscogee	Sumter	Worth
Calhoun	Decatur	Lowndes	Quitman	Terrell	
Chattahoochee	Dooly	Macon	Randolph	Thomas	
Clay	Dougherty	Marion	Schley	Tift	
Colquitt	Early	Miller	Seminole	Turner	

EXISTING CONDITIONS

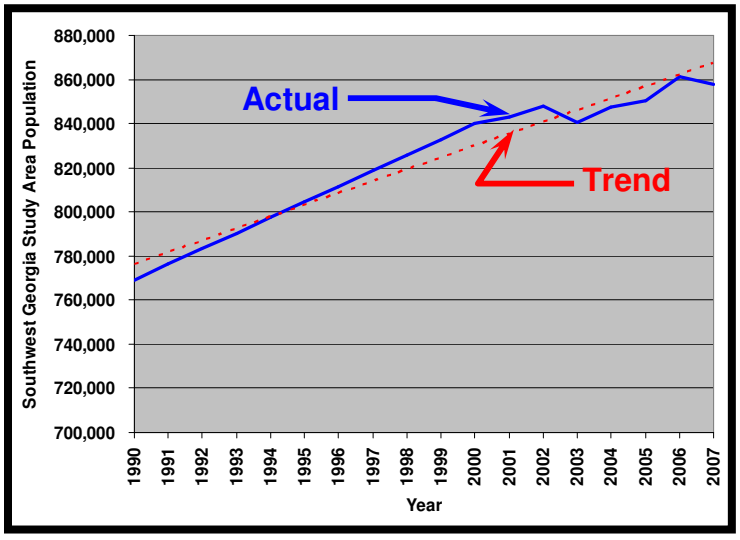
A detailed analysis of the existing conditions was performed for the Southwest Georgia Interstate Study area. This analysis included all facets of conditions in the study area from demographics, to land use to travel conditions. In addition, previous studies were collected and reviewed to build upon prior work.

EXISTING DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

Population and employment data are some of the key data used as inputs to the travel demand model which was used to evaluate the travel conditions in the study. The base year (2006) population and employment information was developed to evaluate existing conditions.

The 2006 population data was prepared based on the Census data county estimates for 2000 and 2006. The largest concentrations of population are located in the urban areas of Columbus, Albany and Valdosta. The overall population growth for the 32 county Southwest Georgia study area between 1990 and 2006 was approximately 12 percent or about 0.7 percent annually and is graphically depicted in Figure 2.

Figure 2
1990 -2006 Study Area Population Growth



Source: U.S. Census Data

Employment data from the Georgia Department of Labor (GDOL) was used as the basis for estimating the 2006 employment levels in the Southwest Georgia study area. These data were adjusted to reflect GDOL 2006 county employment estimates. The overall employment growth for the 32 county Southwest Georgia study area between 1990 and 2006 was approximately 22 percent or about 1.2 percent annually and is graphically depicted in Figure 3.

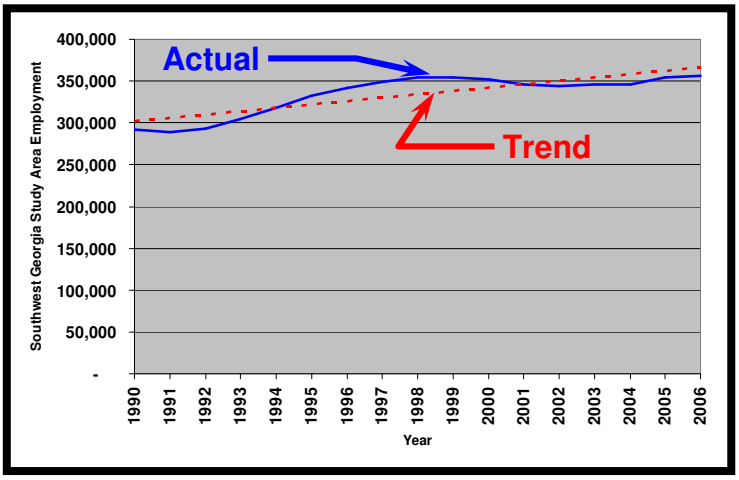
NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

In addition to demographic data, information was collected on natural and cultural resources from a variety of sources such as the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, US Fish and Wildlife Service and the Georgia Conservancy. This information was used to create a database containing the following types of information:

- Rivers, Streams, and Lakes
- Wetlands
- Color Infrared Aerials
- Topographic Maps
- Conservation Land Boundaries
- State Parks
- Tall Timbers Protected Property Easements
- Flatwoods Salamander Critical Habitat
- Roads
- Railroads
- Churches
- Cemeteries
- Schools
- Historic Sites
- Municipal Boundaries

These natural and cultural resources data were used to assist in the identification of sensitive areas and corridors that might be significantly impacted by the construction of a new highway or re-routing of an existing facility.

Figure 3
1990 -2006 Study Area Employment Growth



Source: Georgia Department of Labor

LAND USE

All available county Comprehensive Plans were reviewed to ascertain long range growth priorities, development projects, particular land use sensitivities (such as historic preservation and environmental concerns), and economic development initiatives. Based upon this review seven basic trends were identified that could be used to summarize the development patterns and trends in the study area:

- Commercial growth around / along highway nodes
- Especially supportive of major roadway improvements to stimulate growth or economic development, such as GRIP.
- Desire to strengthen regional economic roles of cities
- Residential growth in urban areas / clusters
- Need to diversify economic base
- Protection of natural resources as priority
- Desire to maintain rural character

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CONDITIONS

The southwest Georgia study area is an economic laggard relative to the strongly performing Georgia State economy and the broader US national economy. The study area faces significant hurdles in realizing its economic potential. Population growth is largely stagnant; per capita income is low, and commercial development

has bypassed this corner of the state for other locales. The region has consistently lagged the State and nation in both population and employment growth since 1970.

Other barometers of the region's economic health are consistent with its economic disadvantage. The per capita income in the region is equivalent to just 72 percent of the US average in 2006. Consistent with the high incidence of poverty and the comparatively low economic opportunity, 23 of the region's 32 counties were identified as Low-education counties. The low level of educational attainment is an important factor for the region's outlook as it reduces the likelihood that investments in other types of capital, such as infrastructure, will enjoy a positive rate of return.

Not all economic indicators for southwest Georgia are as discouraging, however. While employment and population growth are weak, the region stands out in terms of its cost structure. Using the Albany and Columbus metropolitan areas as barometers of the region's cost structure—the rural areas are unlikely to have higher costs than the region's metro economies—Southwest Georgia has among the lowest costs of doing business in the nation. Moody's Economy.com estimates that the cost of doing business in Albany (a weighted average of energy costs, taxes, office rents, and labor costs adjusted for productivity) is 89 percent that of the US average cost.

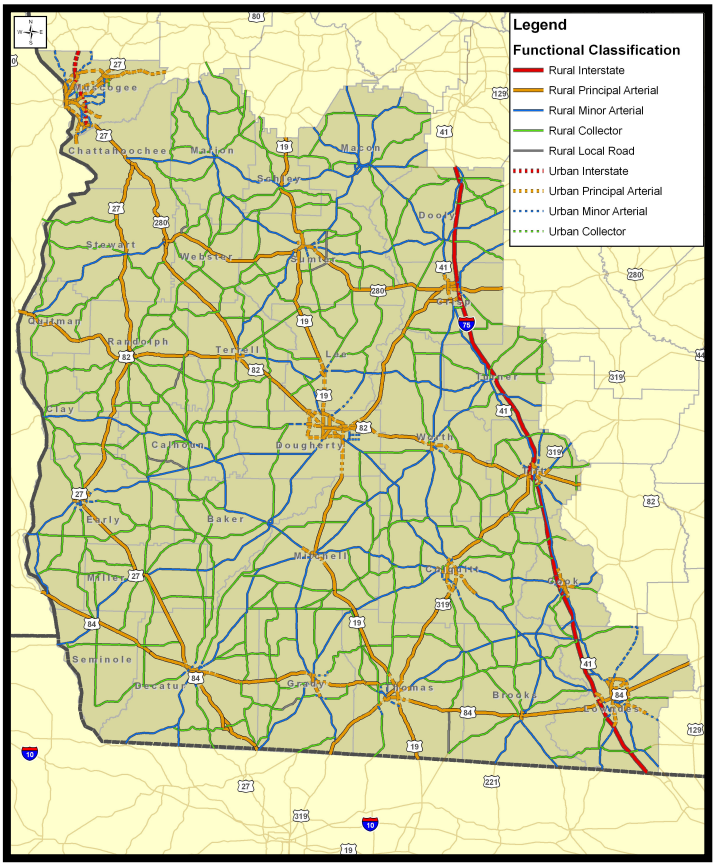
TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM CONDITIONS

The highway network used for analysis in this study is shown in Figure 4. The number of miles included in this network by functional classification designation is illustrated in Table 2. The I-75 corridor provides for north-south travel within and through the study area and has the highest daily travel volumes. Daily travel volumes on I-75 generally range between 50,000 to 60,000 with some sections with over 60,000 vehicles a day. US 280, US 82, US 19 and SR 300 carry the largest non-interstate north-south travel. The largest east-west travel movements occur on US 84 and parts of US 82. The major travel corridors are:

- I-75 from the northern end of the study area to the southern end;
- US 280 to US 82 from Columbus to Albany to Tifton;
- US 19 from Americus to Albany to Thomasville to Tallahassee;
- SR 300 from Cordele to Albany
- US 319 from Tifton to Moultrie to Thomasville
- US 84 from Valdosta to Thomasville to Bainbridge to Georgia-Alabama line

Outside of the metropolitan (MPO) and urban areas, there are currently no facilities that are operating at an unacceptable level of service. This demonstrates that traffic volumes flow smoothly throughout the study area on a corridor level. It is important to note that there may be isolated intersections which have operating problems within the urban areas; however, the level of analysis used in this investigation was not designed to estimate and evaluate traffic operations at the intersection level.

Figure 4
Existing Highway Study Network



Source: Southwest Georgia Interstate Study and GDOT Road Characteristics Data 2007

Table 2
Miles of Highway Network by Functional Classification

Area	Functional Classification	Two-Lane	Multi-Lane	Total
Rural	Rural Interstate	0	159	159
	Rural Principal Arterial	377	728	1,105
	Rural Major Arterial	1,997	2	1,999
	Rural Major Collector	4,022	16	4,038
	Rural Minor Collector	346	0	346
	Rural Local	72	0	72
	Rural Total	***6,814***	***905***	***7,719***
Urban	Urban Interstate	0	27	27
	Urban Freeway	0	10	10
	Urban Principal Arterial	105	201	306
	Urban Minor Collector	186	5	191
	Urban Collector	3	0	3
	Urban Total	***294***	***243***	***537***
Total	Interstate/Freeway	0	186	186
	Principal Arterial	482	939	1,481
	Major/Minor Arterial	2,183	7	2,190
	Major/Minor Collector	4,371	16	4,387
	Local	72	0	72
	Total	***7,108***	***1,148***	***8,256***

Source: Southwest Georgia Interstate Study Travel Demand Model

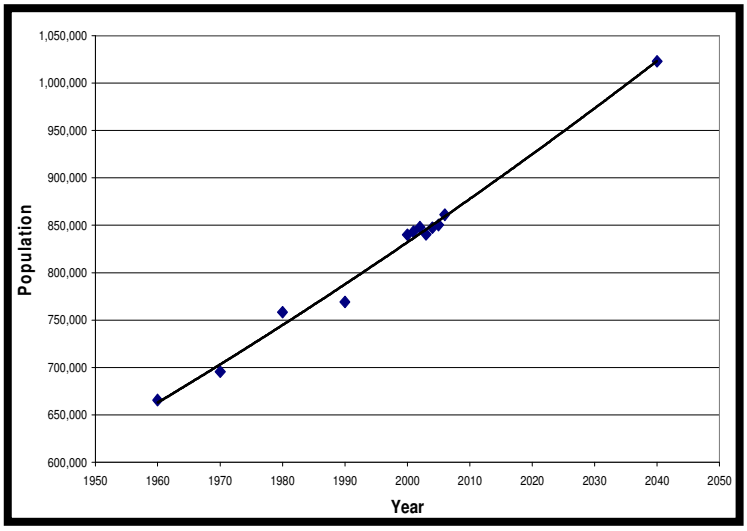
FUTURE CONDITIONS

A detailed analysis of the future conditions was performed for the Southwest Georgia Interstate Study area. This analysis included future demographics, transportation improvement projects that are currently committed, and travel conditions.

FUTURE DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

The 2040 population forecast was prepared using U.S. Census data, Comprehensive Plans, and identified population growth trends. As in the existing conditions, the largest concentrations of future population are expected to be located in the urban areas of Columbus, Albany and Valdosta. The overall population growth for the 32 county Southwest Georgia study area between 2006 and 2040 is anticipated to be 29 percent or about 0.5 percent annually and is graphically depicted in Figure 5.

Figure 5
1970 -2040 Study Area Population Growth Trend



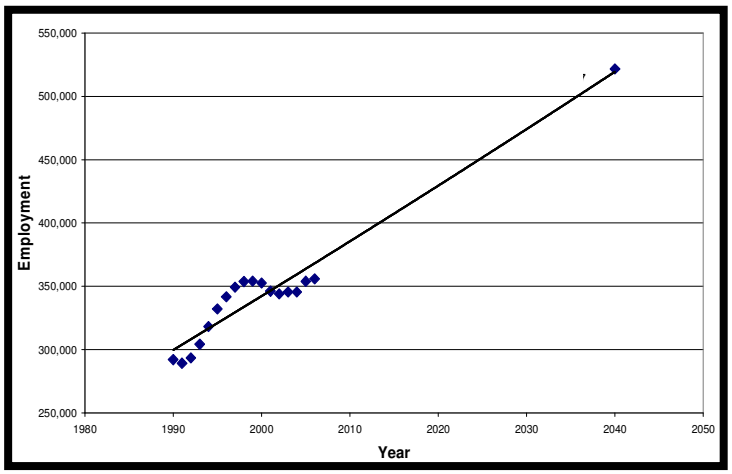
Source: U.S. Census Data and Southwest Georgia Interstate Study

Employment data from the Georgia Department of Labor (GDOL) was used as the basis for estimating the 2040 employment levels in the Southwest Georgia study area. The 1990 to 2006 trends were used to forecast the 2040 employment. The overall employment growth for the 32 county Southwest Georgia study area between 2006 and 2040 was approximately 50 percent or about 1.1 percent annually and is graphically depicted in Figure 6.

COMMITTED IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS

Transportation systems are continually evolving to meet the ever changing traffic demands. There are a number of projects that have been proposed, planned, or in the process of being implemented. Some of those projects will be implemented by the year 2040. The improvements that will be implemented by 2040 should be included in the analysis of future conditions for this investigation. The projects that were assumed to be implemented within the study area by 2040 are shown in Figure 7 and listed in Table 3. This highway network served as the future year transportation system for the comparison of alternate improvement scenarios. It is important to note that some of these improvement projects are currently under construction.

Figure 6
1970 -2040 Study Area Employment Growth Trend



Source: Georgia Department of Labor and Southwest Georgia Interstate Study

Figure 7
Assumed Committed Transportation Improvement Projects in Southwest Georgia Study Area

Source: GDOT Construction Work Program in July, 2008, GDOT review, and TREX

Table 3
Assumed Committed Projects Implemented by 2040

County	Facility	Improvement
Muscogee	I-185	Widen from 4 to 6 lanes from SR 520 to St. Marys Road
Muscogee	Schatulga Rd (Eastern Connector)	New 4 lane road from Red Arrow Rd/Cargo Rd to Chatsworth Rd
Muscogee	SR 22SP/ Macon Rd	Widen from 2 to 4 lanes from Reese Rd to Woodruff Farm Rd
Muscogee	St. Marys Rd	Widen from 2 to 4 lanes from Buena Vista Rd to Robin Dr
Cook	I-75	Widen from 4 to 6 lanes from SR 37 to CR 246/Kinard Bridge Rd
Cook	I-75	Widen from 4 to 6 lanes from CR 246/Kinard Bridge Rd to Tift County line
Crisp	I-75	Widen from 4 to 6 lanes from SR 300 to Dooly County line
Lowndes	I-75	Widen from 4 to 6 lanes from North of SR 133 to Cook County line
Tift	I-75	Widen from 4 to 6 lanes from Cook County line to CR 204/Southwell Blvd
Turner	I-75	Widen from 4 to 6 lanes from SR 32 to SR 159
Turner	I-75	Widen from 4 to 6 lanes from Tift County line to SR 32
Early	SR 1 / US27	Widen from 2 to 4 lanes from CR 279/Damascus-Hilton Rd to Blakely Bypass
Miller	SR 1 / US27	Widen from 4 to 6 lanes from West City Limits Colquitt to CR 279/Damascus-Hilton Rd
Lee	SR 3/SR 49/ US 19	Widen from 2 to 4 lanes from North of CR151 to Sumter County line
Sumter	SR 3/SR 49/ US 19	Widen from 2 to 4 lanes from Lee County Line to CR 42/ Sumter
Sumter	SR 3/SR 49/ US 19	Widen from 2 to 4 lanes from CR 42 to 0.3 Mi North of US-280
Schley	SR 3/US 19	Widen from 2 to 4 lanes from Angelica Creek/Sumter to SR 271
Schley	SR 3/US 19	Widen from 2 to 4 lanes from SR 271 to SR 240
Schley	SR 3/US 19	Widen from 2 to 4 lanes from SR 240 to CR 201/Cooper Rd/Taylor
Early	SR 38/US 84	Widen from 2 to 4 lanes from Alabama State Line to SR 370

Source: GDOT Construction Work Program in July, 2008, GDOT review, and TREX

FUTURE TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM CONDITIONS

Using the forecast future growth for 2040 and the existing transportation network with the committed improvements assumed to be implemented, estimates of the future travel conditions in the study area were made using the travel demand model developed for the study. Table 4 shows the increases in travel times to each of the interstate facilities servicing the study area (I-75, I-185 and I-10).

The increases in travel times to I-75 and I-185 are generally less than 10% over the current (2006) travel times with 15% being the maximum increase (Albany to I-75). The most significant increases in travel times are exhibited in the southern portion of the study area in the access to I-10. These significant increases in travel times are the result of the increasing travel demands between the communities in the southern portion of the study area, such as Thomasville and Bainbridge, and the northern portion of Florida via I-10. Travel time increases for access to I-10 generally were over 15% and as high as 42% (Thomasville to I-10),

Table 4
Percent Change in Travel Time from 2006 to 2040

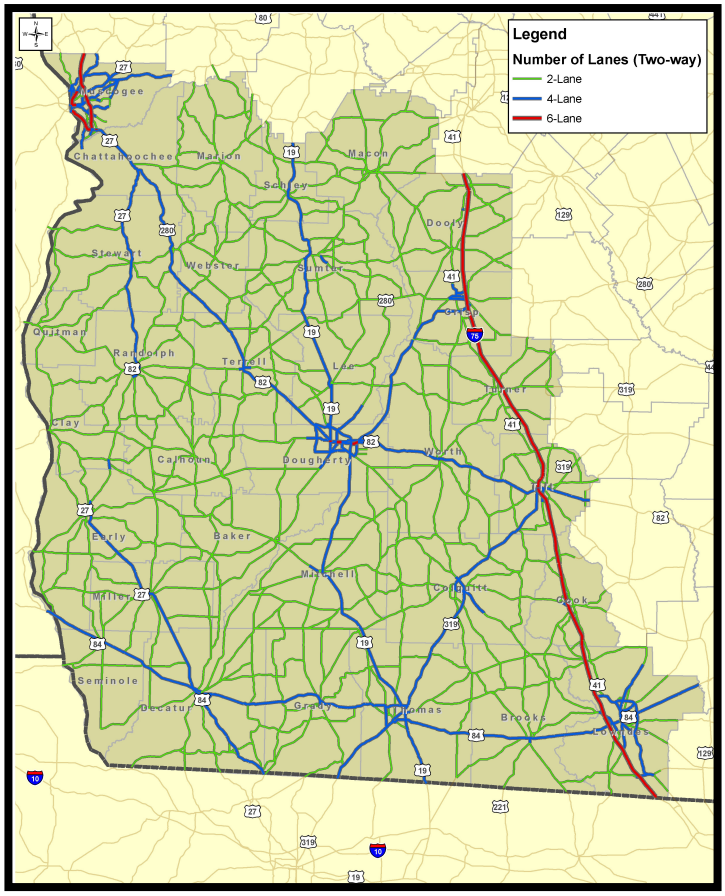
City	Percent Change in Travel Time 2006 - 2040		
	To I-75	To I-185	To I-10
Albany	15%	9%	21%
Americus	3%	6%	17%
Bainbridge	6%	1%	40%
Blakely	7%	4%	24%
Buena Vista	1%	8%	11%
Camilla	2%	9%	28%
Columbus	5%	0%	15%
Cordele	0%	5%	5%
Cuthbert	1%	8%	17%
Dawson	2%	6%	21%
Georgetown	1%	7%	16%
Lumpkin	1%	11%	15%
Moultrie	1%	8%	24%
Oglethorpe	2%	2%	4%
Quitman	10%	7%	8%
Thomasville	10%	8%	42%
Tifton	0%	12%	6%
Valdosta	0%	12%	6%

Source: Southwest Georgia Interstate Study Travel Demand Model

It is important to note that even with the increase in travel in the study area there was not a general increase in the level of congestion for the study area as a whole. There was one corridor that exhibited an increase in congestion such that the level of service was identified as deficient which was the SR 133 corridor from Albany to Moultrie to Valdosta.

One of the primary reasons for the relatively high level of service in the study area is the substantial number of multi-lane facilities that are available for travel in 2040 with the existing system and the committed projects. This existing plus committed highway system is shown in Figure 8. This system of multi-lane facilities provides a high level of traffic service for the predominate flow of north-south traffic in the study area.

Figure 8
2040 Existing and Committed Highway Network by Number of Travel Lanes



Source: Southwest Georgia Interstate Study Travel Demand Model

ANALYSIS OF INTERSTATE ALTERNATES

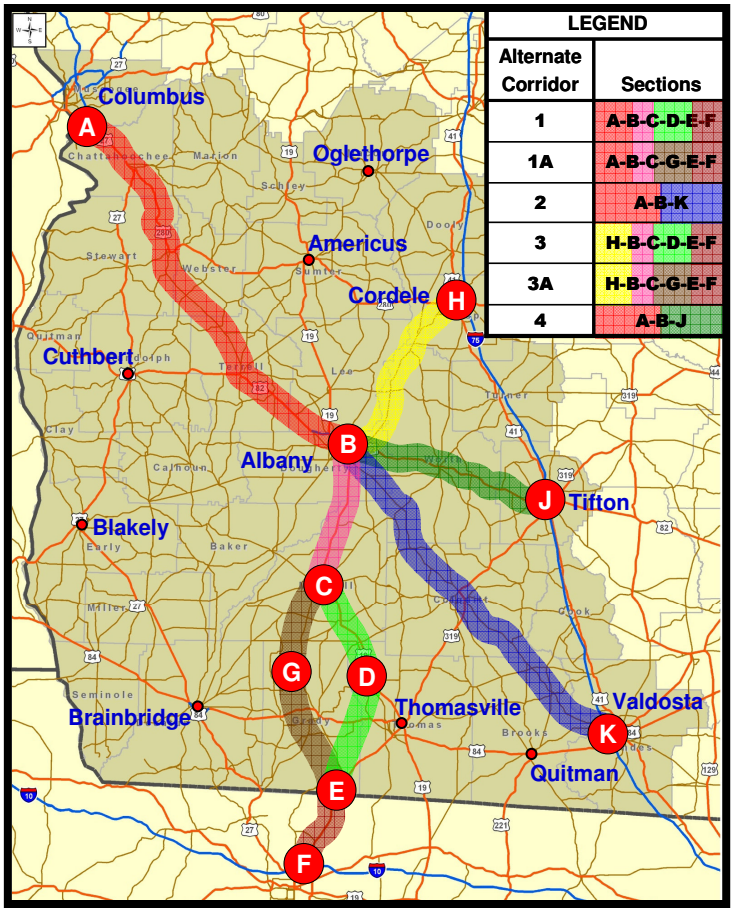
One of the principal interests of this study was the analysis and evaluation of the need, impact, and feasibility of the addition of a new interstate type facility serving the Southwest Georgia area. As part of this process several key factors were investigated, including: potential corridor alignments, economic benefits, travel service, implementation costs, and cost effectiveness.

The process initially identified ten alternative corridors. These ten corridors were screened to determine the corridors which provided the most effective travel service. This initial screening resulted in the selection of four corridors which were investigated in more detail. Two of the corridors had sub-alternative alignment configurations. These alternative corridors are shown in Figure 9.

TRAVEL SERVICE

Since the evaluation of the future (2040) existing plus committed projects network had revealed that there were not major congestion issues in the study area outside the urban areas, the focus of the travel service changes concentrated on the reductions in travel times afforded the motoring public that could be associated with the implementation of an interstate type facility.

Figure 9
Interstate Type Facility Alternative Corridors



Source: Southwest Georgia Interstate Study

These changes in travel time savings, in vehicle hours of travel, were measured between the various alternatives and the existing plus committed highway system for the year 2040. A vehicle hour of travel represents one vehicle traveling for one hour. Table 5 identifies the difference in vehicle hours of travel between each of the alternates and the existing plus committed highway network.

Table 5
Percent Change in 2040 Vehicle Hours of Travel for Interstate Alternatives vs. Existing Plus Committed System

Alternate	Within Alternate Corridor	I-75 Corridor	Southwest Georgia Study Area
1	12.8%	-12.0%	-1.4%
1A	12.0%	-10.4%	-1.4%
2	58.1%	-19.3%	-2.5%
3	8.9%	-7.6%	-2.2%
3A	14.2%	-5.5%	-1.8%
4	12.3%	-3.7%	-1.9%

Source: Southwest Georgia Interstate Study Travel Demand Model

As can be seen in Table 5, Alternate 2 (Columbus-Albany-Valdosta) has the largest increase in vehicle hours of travel within the alternate corridor along with the largest decrease in vehicle hours of travel for both the I-75 corridor (19.3%) and the Southwest Georgia study area (2.5%).

The increase in vehicle hours of travel within the alternate corridor would be expected as trips are attracted to the new interstate type facility in the alternate corridor and diverted away from other corridors. Alternate 2 provides the largest reduction in vehicle hours of travel from the I-75 corridor as trips are diverted from the I-75 corridor to the Alternate 2 corridor. Alternate 2 also provides the largest decrease in vehicle hours of travel for the overall Southwest Georgia study area. It should be note that this overall decrease in vehicle hours of travel is relatively minor which is further illustrated by the savings in travel times for three typical trips within the study area is shown in Table 6.

Table 6
2040 Travel Times for Typical Trips
Interstate Alternatives vs. Existing Plus Committed System

Alternate	Columbus to Valdosta		Columbus to Albany		Albany to Tifton	
	Minutes	%[2]	Minutes	%[2]	Minutes	%[2]
No Build[1]	*203*	*N/A*	*105*	*N/A*	*57*	*N/A*
1	179	12%	86	18%	54	5%
1A	179	12%	85	19%	54	5%
2	159	22%	86	18%	51	11%
3	198	2%	105	0%	52	9%
3A	198	2%	105	0%	52	9%
4	168	17%	86	18%	43	25%

Source: Southwest Georgia Interstate Study Travel Demand Model

Notes:
[1] Existing Plus Committed 2040 Highway Network
[2] Percent Reduction in Travel Time from the No Build Network

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

The potential impact of the proposed alternates on key environmental factors was taken into consideration based upon a preliminary environmental screening. The results of this screening are shown in Table 7. As can be seen from this information, there could be significant impacts on the streams, wetlands, forest land, and agricultural lands.

Table 7
Preliminary Environmental Screening Impacts

Alternate	Streams (Linear Feet)	Wetlands (Acres)	Forest (Acres)	Agriculture (Acres)
1	56,506	276	2,455	1,802
1A	49,137	203	2,353	1,856
2	47,500	140	1,755	2,439
3	42,177	346	1,781	1,398
3A	34,808	273	1,679	1,452
4	39,890	100	1,610	1,416

Source: Southwest Georgia Interstate Study

LAND USE & COMMUNITY IMPACT CONSIDERATIONS

Each of the alternatives was investigated for the potential impacts on land use and the community. This analysis consisted of the evaluation of each of the alternatives based upon a series of eighteen factors which included the following:

- Consistent with land use policies
- Consistent with transportation policies
- Consistent with economic development policies
- Consistent with zoning
- Compatible with existing adjacent land uses
- Compatible with regional context
- Access to healthcare facilities
- Access to higher educational facilities
- Access to training facilities
- Access to employment centers
- Access to residential population areas
- Impact on populations in poverty
- Impact on minority populations
- Impact on elderly populations
- Impact on populations without high school diploma
- Impact on cities/villages/ subdivisions
- Impact on historical and cultural assets
- Impact on prime agricultural lands

Each of these factors was evaluated using five general criteria:

1) Overall positive impact	4) Overall slightly negative impact
2) Overall slightly positive impact	5) Overall negative impact
3) Overall mixed impact	

Using these evaluation factors and the general criteria a summary of these evaluations is shown in Table 8 which shows the total number of criteria estimated for each alternate along with the overall rating.

Table 8
Land Use and Community Impact Evaluation of Interstate Alternatives

Alternate	General Criteria					Overall Rating
	1	2	3	4	5	
1	1	0	13	0	4	3
1A	2	0	12	0	4	3
2	7	0	3	0	8	2
3	3	0	12	0	3	3
3A	3	0	12	0	3	3
4	8	0	3	0	7	2

Source: Southwest Georgia Interstate Study

ECONOMIC BENEFITS

The economic benefits associated with the proposed interstate alternatives were based upon two distinct types of benefits: transportation benefits and economic development benefits. The transportation benefits included: reduced vehicle operating costs, reduced travel time (travel time savings), and improved safety through the possibly to reduce accidents on a limited access facility. The transportation benefits were found to be mixed. First, travelers will drive further to get onto the new interstate facility increasing vehicle operating costs as the average trip length increases. Second, travelers will save a minimal amount of time by using the new interstate facility as noted previously. Finally, the number of accidents might be reduced as travelers divert to a limited access facility. The economic development benefits were based upon two primary considerations: expansion of market access for existing industries, and expansion of markets supporting additional growth and diversification.

The economic development benefits were estimated using a methodology that accounted for both the expansion of existing industries, and the potential for additional diversified growth associated with the expanded economy using the follow steps:

- Identify the export base of the Southwest Georgia economy;
- Estimate the export share of the industries;
- Identify market expansion associated with each industry;
- Adjust the export base to account for the market expansion projected to occur for each of the interstate alternates;
- Estimate the number of jobs and earnings associated with each of the interstate alternates to account for the secondary economic effects;
- For each industry, apply input-output multipliers to assess the additional growth supported by market expansion across all industries; and
- Estimate the number of jobs and earnings associated with the secondary economic effect for each alternate.

Using these procedures the total economic benefits for each of the interstate alternates was calculated for the period 2016 to 2040. These benefits are summarized in Table 9 in 2008 dollars.

Table 9
2016 – 2040 Estimated Interstate Alternates Benefits
In Millions of 2008 Dollars

Alternate	Safety	Travel Time Savings	Travel Cost Savings	Economic Benefits	Total Benefits
1	$ 37.43	$ 49.77	-$ 813.53	$ 885.23	$ 158.91
1A	$ 28.53	$ 46.77	-$ 708.82	$ 885.23	$ 251.72
2	$107.42	$ 100.98	-$ 967.77	$ 1,327.85	$ 568.48
3	$ 24.45	$ 58.66	-$ 342.31	$ 173.20	-$ 86.00
3A	$ 9.36	$ 55.99	-$ 363.46	$ 192.44	-$ 105.66
4	$144.12	$ 65.32	-$ 859.83	$ 1,308.61	$ 658.22

Source: Southwest Georgia Interstate Study

ESTIMATED COSTS

Cost estimates for implementation of each of the interstate alternates were made. These cost estimates included: preliminary engineering, right-of-way, utility relocation, and construction. These costs are shown in Table 10. As can be seen from the information in Table 10 the estimated cost for implementation of the interstate alternates ranged from $2,490,000,000 to $3,450,000,000 in 2008 dollars.

Table 10
Estimated Implementation Costs for Interstate Alternates
In Billions of 2008 Dollars

Alternate	PE[1]	ROW[2]	Utilities[3]	Construction	Total
1	$ 0.21	$ 0.54	$ 0.082	$ 2.61	$ 3.44
1A	$ 0.21	$ 0.57	$ 0.073	$ 2.64	$ 3.45
2	$ 0.20	$ 0.51	$ 0.077	$ 2.51	$ 3.30
3	$ 0.17	$ 0.25	$ 0.060	$ 2.11	$ 2.58
3A	$ 0.17	$ 0.28	$ 0.051	$ 2.10	$ 2.59
4	$ 0.14	$ 0.50	$ 0.060	$ 1.79	$ 2.49

Source: Southwest Georgia Interstate Study

Notes:
[1] Preliminary Engineering
[2] Right-of-Way
[3] Utility Relocation

COST EFFECTIVENESS

In order to determine if the cost of implementing the interstate alternates would be worth the expenditure of the estimated implementation costs, the estimated benefits received were compared to the estimated implementation costs. This comparison is typically made using the ratio of the total benefits to the total costs. While in theory any project with this benefit to cost ratio exceeding 1.0 is worthwhile, analysts generally agree that there is some error in estimating both the benefits and costs. Therefore, project evaluations typically seek a minimum benefit-to-cost ratio exceeding 2.0 for very large new projects. Table 11 shows the benefit-to-cost ratio for the interstate alternates. As can be seen from the information in Table 11, none of the interstate alternates had a benefit-to-cost ratio above 1.0.

Table 11
Interstate Alternates Estimated Benefit-to-Cost (B/C) Ratios

	Alternate					
	1	1A	2	3	3A	4
B/C Ratio	0.058	0.092	0.217	-0.042	-0.051	0.333

Source: Southwest Georgia Interstate Study

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

In order to ensure that the public had a significant input into the overall study, an extensive public involvement process was carried out throughout the study. This process consisted of stakeholders group meetings (6), public meetings (11), stakeholder questionnaires (40 responses), general survey distributed via public school students (4,500 responses), and project web site with comment capability (50 responses). Based upon this public involvement process there was not substantial support for the implementation of a new interstate facility in Southwest Georgia. The top issues and concerns expressed throughout the process were:

- Speeding,
- Tractor trailer trucks,
- Intersection safety, and
- Inconsistent speeds on major intercity highways

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based upon the analyses and evaluations conducted as part of this detailed investigation of the potential feasibility and desirability of construction of a new interstate facility in Southwest Georgia, the following are recommended:

- Do not pursue the construction of an interstate facility in Southwest Georgia;
- Focus of the available resources should be concentrated on completing the existing Governor's Road Improvement Program (GRIP) projects in the study area, especially in the key corridors of:
  - SR 133 from Albany to Valdosta, and
  - US 27;
- Further analysis and evaluation of additional roadway upgrades and widenings, including:
  - Shoulder widenings,
  - Signage improvements,
  - Minor widenings, passing lanes, and lane width standardization.
  - Improvements through various towns/cities, and
  - Evaluations for consistency of speed limits on major intercity highways.